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As reported to the OVH e-mail reflector by Bob Zeapfel, K4HJF, 3/25/04

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The following is a short report of the meeting some OVH members had with the Manassas City Utilities Department on Tuesday, 3/23/04.

Meeting with City of Manassas Utilities Dept., March 23, 2004

Bob Zeapfel, George Tarnovsky, and Don Blasdel met with representatives from the City of Manassas at the Manassas facility located at 8500 Public Works drive in the City. The following Manassas Electric Department personnel and Main Net people attended the meeting.

Allen P Todd, W4VUB, Director of Utilities (City of Manassas) Lawrence A. Bates, K0LB, Director of Information Technology (City of Manassas) John Hewa, Assistant Director Electric Utility (City of Manassas)

Mr. Joe Marsilii Main Net
Mr. Zack Burrows Main Net

After introductions and pleasantries, Mr. Todd indicated that he was glad to make contact with the Ole Virginia Hams representatives, as he, too is a ham (W4VUB). He also said that the city of Manassas had a very open attitude toward BPL and its implementation and was not trying to hide anything. They were very glad to share their ideas and concepts of the way they were installing BPL. During discussions they were surprised that we have observed interference from both the Weir/Traveller and Signal Hill installations. The City in conjunction with its partner, Main Net, believes that the implementation of BPL will ultimately result in no harmful interference to amateurs or other licensed users of the spectrum.

Mr. Hewa then presented a slide show of current and future BPL installations. He advised that 80 percent of the current installations were underground and the two overhead installations were at Weir/Traveller and Signal Hill. Mr. Todd and Mr. Hewa explained that Manassas selected the BPL technology initially to improve monitoring of the electric grid, with the thought to provide High Speed internet service with very high data rates to individual home owners and businesses. The topology of the Manassas BPL network was explained as well as how the BPL was operating at the location with circuit speeds up to 2 megabits. They also demonstrated the latest type of BPL modems that filter out selected sections of the spectrum and gave us an actual connection over the system with the selective filtering activated. Main Net technical expert Mr. Zach Burrows explained how the system functions and how each box mounted on a power pole or underground junction box could be a stand alone unit or act as a repeater. The longest power line connection is approximately 800 ft. Mr. Burrows also advised that if no network activity is recognized by the modem, the modem goes into quiet mode and will not transmit. That's why we have noticed at certain times very little activity from some areas

where boxes are mounted on poles. In addition Mr. Marsilii advised that eventually, all BPL modems installed will have the selective band filter capability. After the slide presentation and discussion between members, Mr. Todd suggested that we (Bob, Gorge and Butch), view a typical BPL installation installed behind the main building. They demonstrated underground and overhead pole installations.

Mr. Todd also said that they would be glad at any time to go out with W4OVH members to monitor BPL interference. Mr. Todd also advised that Manassas Electric Utility would be glad to Host and give the full W4OVH membership a talk and slide presentation with demo at their main facility at a regular OVH meeting. Bob Zaepfel offered to have the City hook up his home on Longstreet Drive for BPL so that we could have a useful test bed in a RF rich environment to see how BPL would affect his operations and whether or not his signals would cause difficulties to BPL embedded microprocessors. He will take up the matter with Mr. Todd soon.

The City was very cordial and welcoming to us. Clearly, the City believes that it is not causing any harmful interference at this time. Further testing, perhaps using Bob's home as a test site, may prove otherwise.

Thanks to Butch, Mary Lu and George for their work on behalf of OVH.

Bob Zaepfel, K4HJF

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